

We claim:

1. A decoding protection method, for operating on information which is transferred through a medium and comprises main data which are to be decoded, the method comprising the steps of:

detecting protection data which are also transferred through said medium;

limiting reproduction based upon at least a film classification system;

generating apparatus protection data which comprise at least first apparatus protection data and second apparatus protection data,

wherein said first apparatus protection data are specific to a region or a country in which said main data are to be decoded and are unmodifiable by a recipient of said decoded main data and said second apparatus protection data can be modified by the recipient to selectively define a plurality of protection levels including at least two levels which are respectively specific to adults and to children;

defining a protection level based on said protection data and on said apparatus protection data, in combination; and

executing decoding of said main data in accordance with said protection level,

wherein the combination of said protection data and said first apparatus protection data specifies that said main data are decoded either in their entirety or not at all, and the combination of said protection data and said second apparatus protection data specifies that said main data are decoded in their entirety, partially, or not at all,

wherein said data medium transfers both said medium protection data and said main data in an identical form.

2. A reproduction protection method in accordance with claim 1, wherein both said medium protection data and said main data are transferred in an identical form.

3. A reproduction protection method in accordance with claim 1, comprising the step of transferring said medium protection data and said main data in an identical form.

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